WALTER PATER

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CONTEMPORARY MEN
OF LETTERS SERIES

EDITED BY

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WALTER PATER

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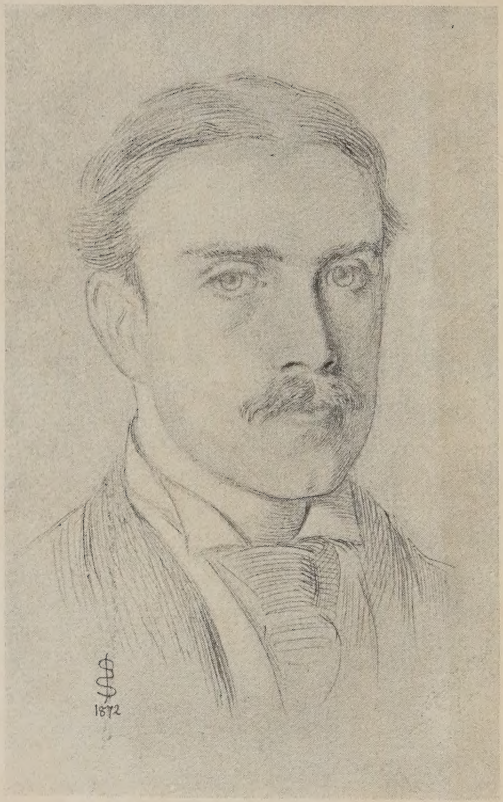
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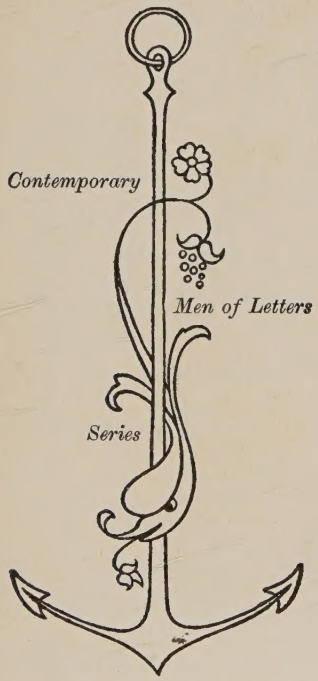
WALTER PATER

BY FERRIS GREENSLET



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PREFATORY NOTE

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This brief study of the life and work of Walter Pater does not pretend to be the "verdict of posterity," for it has to do with an author whose personal influence is still active in contemporary literature. Yet perhaps in dealing with such a person as Pater, who is notable chiefly for literary and scholarly labors, spatial distance may afford something of the perspective usually given only by remoteness in time. In any case Pater is the last man in the world to be made the subject of Boswellian biography. I have tried here to make him, so far as possible, his own interpreter; and I have hoped by

quotation, frequent and unashamed, to convey some intimation of his quality.

As Pater's career was so essentially a matter of "mere literature," I have been at some pains to make the Chronology which is appended a complete and accurate bibliography of his writings. In preparing this I have been aided by Mr. Shadwell's list prefixed to the "Miscellaneous Studies" and by the lists of Pater's review articles contained in the *Athenæum's* review of the first English edition of the "Essays from the Guardian."

F. G.

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WALTER PATER

"When I read the book, the biography famous,
And is this, then, (said I) what the author calls
a man's life?
And so will someone when I am dead and gone
write my life?
(As if any man really knew aught of my life;
Why, even I myself, I often think, know little or
nothing of my real life;
Only a few hints—a few diffused, faint clues and
indirections
I seek for my own use to trace out here.)"

WHITMAN.

I

A CHILD IN THE HOUSE

The writer of biography who can muster the strength of mind sometimes to leave his shop, and in the open to meditate upon his trade, must often be abashed at its facile presumptions. If he strive to recall the flow of his own life, he will find that it has been full of mystery to himself — and to others, to his friends even, or to his very housemates, much more mysterious. How hardly, then, shall he explain the life of one whom he has never seen, who lived perhaps in a far land, in other times, amid an alien

people. Yet so assured are men of the resurrective power of literary scholarship that they have not hesitated to attempt the recall of such remote and misty persons as Abélard or Zoroaster. But, after he has once felt this sense of futility, the biographer will always wish to make some preliminary reservation. He will undertake to deal fairly with his reader, to be diligent in gathering knowledge of his subject, to order it carefully, to ponder it strictly and sympathetically; but he will not undertake to portray the elusive personality in all its fulness. Such reservation as this is especially needful in the case of a man like Walter Pater. His life was self-contained, subjective, stationary; it was a life of academic amen-

ity, singularly devoid of the "rubs, doublings, and wrenches" which afford the biographer his best, most picturesque opportunity. The annals of it are short, and, if confined to external happenings, simple. But the interpretation of them is a more difficult affair. If we can capture some clews and hints of character, however diffused and indirect, if we can partially apprehend a fugitive and recondite but strangely effective literary personality, we shall be fortunate.

It is, perhaps, significant that Walter Pater, one of the most minutely laborious of English writers, should have been of Dutch extraction; for in all Low Country workmanship he was to recognise a "minute and scrupulous air of

care-taking and neatness." In the eighteenth century the Paters had migrated from Holland to England, intermarried with their English compeers, and become known as a highly respectable family of the middle class. Early in the last century Richard Glode Pater, the father of our author, was born, by the chances of travel, in New York. Taken back to England while still a young boy, he was in due time married to Maria Hill, a north country girl, and settled in life as a physician. In his career one thing is especially to our purpose. For generations before him the Pater family had adhered piously to an extraordinary custom. There would seem to have been some ancient division of religious senti-

ment between the Paters and their English wives. In consequence of this the male children of the family were invariably reared as good Catholics, while the daughters, quite as invariably, were brought up in the Anglican communion. Early in his life Dr. Richard Glode Pater left the Church of Rome to take up no other connection. Thus his sons, with the ancient tradition of the Church of Rome in their mental heritage, were the first of the family to be educated out of Catholicism.

Walter Horatio Pater, the second of four children, was born at Shadwell in the East of London, on the fourth of August, 1839. Not long after this event Dr. Pater moved with his household to

Enfield, in Middlesex, some four leagues from London, and it was there that Walter Pater passed the better part of his youth. Of his earliest childhood there are few facts of sufficient importance to be reported. It will not do, however, to overlook a strange and pretty game described by Mr. Edmund Gosse as much beloved by the Pater children. This would seem to have been a kind of make-believe mass or other ritualistic ceremonial, in which the young Walter, arrayed in an improvised dalmatic, with sedate dignity and hieratic solemnity of demeanour, would always be bishop.

But although the chronicle of events in Mr. Pater's life would have perforce

to leap from his birth to his fourteenth year, it is, perhaps, not too fanciful to find in that imaginative study of the psychology of youth, "The Child in the House," some hints of certain very real influences in his own childhood. To begin with the more tangible things: that "white Angora with a dark tail like an ermine's, and a face like a flower, who fell into a lingering sickness and became quite delicately human in its valetudinarianism, and came to have a hundred different expressions of voice," must surely have arched her dainty way in visible, purring, feline presence through the old house at Enfield. And it is hard to believe that the peculiarly intimate realisation of a kind of mystic

personality in the house itself, so vital a charm in this study and so often recurrent in his other work, had no prototype in the thoughts of young Pater. To any sensitive child, of course, the home, with its multitudinous objects and manifold associations, will seem a part of himself, a second and more comprehensive "me." So far "The Child in the House" is but a study in the paganism of young minds; yet here and there are suggestions of that almost hyperæsthetic sensitiveness that we associate with Pater, which seem to give to it a clear personal reference. No one is likely to doubt that in such passages as this there is a core of reminiscence:

"From this point he could trace two

predominant processes of mental change in him—the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering, and, parallel with this, the rapid growth of a certain capacity of fascination by bright colour and choice form—the sweet curvings, for instance, of the lips of those who seemed to him comely persons, modulated in such delicate unison to what they said or sang—marking early the activity in him of a more than customary sensuousness, 'the lust of the eye,' as the Preacher says, which might lead him, one day, how far! Could he have foreseen the weariness of the way! In music sometimes the two sorts of impressions came together, and he would weep, to the surprise of older people."

We know, too, that there came one time a "cry on the stair," telling of a death in the house. We may well believe that he was never precisely a vociferous boy, and remembering how much of his mature writing was to partake of the sombreness of *meditatio mortis,* we may see something other than fiction in what he tells us of Florian Deleal's sympathetic but quite morbid imaginings:

"He would think of Julian, fallen into incurable sickness, as spoiled in the sweet blossom of his skin like pale amber and his honey-like hair; of Cecil, early dead, as cut off from the lilies, from golden summer days, from women's voices; and what comforted him a little was the thought of the turning of the child's

flesh to violets in the turf above him. And thinking of the very poor, it was not the things that most men care most for that he yearned to give them; but fairer roses, perhaps, and power to taste quite as they will, at their ease and not task-burdened, a certain desirable clear light in the new morning, through which sometimes he had noticed them, quite unconscious of it, on the way to their early toil."

Finally, considering the location of Enfield, it is reasonable to suppose that Walter Pater, as well as Florian Deleal, was wrought upon by the mysterious *urbanity* of the adjacent city; and remembering that pontifical play one must be confident that he, too, "began to love, for

their own sakes, church lights, holy days, all that belonged to the comely order of the sanctuary, the secrets of its white linen, and holy vessels, and fonts of pure water;" and that for him, too, "its hieratic purity and simplicity became the type of something he desired always to have about him in actual life."

When he was fourteen Pater was sent away from his home to King's School at Canterbury. He appears there as a somewhat slow and serious boy, not caring for boisterous sports, sometimes thought an idler, or perhaps a dreamer. It is the consensus of opinion among Pater's friends that the background and setting for the account of Emerald Uthwart's schooldays is this Canterbury Academe.

Here, in one of the places in which England has "preferred to locate the somewhat pensive education of its more favoured youth," he studied his classics. As he acquired pagan Latin and Greek in the very shadow of mediævalism, there may have come to him some of those "delightful physiognomic results" which he afterward noted in many a boyish face. At any rate it must have been at this time that he first became a diligent reader of books. There are, he tells us, "in every generation of schoolboys . . . a few who find out, almost for themselves, the beauty and power of good literature, even in the literature they must read perforce; and this, in turn, is but the handsel of a beauty and power still active in the actual

world, should they have the good fortune, or rather acquire the skill, to deal with it properly. It has something of the stir and unction — this intellectual awaking with a leap—of the coming of love." With Pater as with Emerald Uthwart, this quickening seems to have taken place when he was in his seventeenth year.

Toward the end of his schooldays he came much under the influence of the polished scholarship, graceful lyric gift, and gentle piety of Keble. For a time hence, it is said, he thought of ultimately taking orders. But this proved to be only a fervour of adolescence, and when, at the age of nineteen, he went up to Oxford, the bent of his future career was still undetermined.

II

OXFORD

In June, 1858, Pater matriculated at Oxford as a commoner of Queen's College, with an exhibition from Canterbury. Henceforth his life ran smoothly in the traditional academic channel with which English literary biography has familiarly acquainted us. Oxford, "that sweet city with her dreaming spires," was to be his home for nearly all of his life. It is, perhaps, just to imagine that in his very style we may discover something of the spirit of her mood as Matthew Arnold found another trace of it in Newman's.

It has always been the right and natural thing for the undergraduate of sensibility to come under the spell of some

one or two makers of the "literature of power." Walter Pater, being before all else an undergraduate of sensibility, was not slow so to yield himself. By 1859 he had become devoted to Ruskin and to Goethe. Their influence he was, perhaps, to transcend, certainly to fuse with many others, but never wholly to belie or disown.

Such reading as this, reinforced by his philosophical studies, led him to the way beaten by the feet of many generations of reflective youth. Before the end of his undergraduate days he seems, again like his own Florian Deleal, to have been much occupied with "the estimate of the proportion of the sensuous and ideal elements in human knowledge, the relative

parts they bear in it; and, in his intellectual scheme, was led to assign very little to the abstract thought, and much to its sensible vehicle or occasion." Not long after this, his philosophical and sceptical tendency finally prevailed over his half-formed intention of becoming a Unitarian clergyman—a notion that had occurred to him after he had abandoned the intention of entering the Establishment. Indeed, he had already begun, consciously and carefully, to acquire technique in the art which was to be his. Though none of his undergraduate productions has been preserved, we hear of copious verse translation from Goethe, from Alfred de Musset, and from that fragrant jardinière for the perfuming of a young gen-

tleman's style, the "Greek Anthology." A little later there was a time when for months he applied himself daily to the painstaking translation of a page from the prose of Sainte-Beuve, or Flaubert, eminent humanists, patient artists with the file, and favoured lovers of the proper word. The effect of such labour as this in forming his finished style is incalculable.

In 1862 Pater graduated B.A. with a second class in classics. As he had been coached by Jowett himself, and hoped for a first, he seems always to have regarded his degree as something of a disappointment. For two years he was a private tutor; in 1864 he became Fellow of Brasenose, and then, in 1865, he proceed-

ed M.A. As is the way with men of his character, these first years after graduation were momentous in fixing his temperament and in determining the direction of his life. It was at this time that he became a member of an essay club suggestively known as the "Old Mortality," and the intimate friend of such men as T. H. Green, Professor Nettleship, Principal Caird, and Mr. Swinburne. His early study of character, "Diaphaneitè," published posthumously, but written in 1864, was read to this circle of friends. It is a document of very curious interest to the student of Pater's mind. It shows the sensuous, subtilely allusive, somewhat languorous flow of his style still undeveloped. The

sentences are shorter, more uniformly periodic; and the whole composition moves with unwonted resiliency and speed. But in the intimacy of the study, and in the comely, Hellenic type of character held up to our admiration, there is a clear foreshadowing of Pater's later manner and theme. It is, moreover, pervaded by the "wistfulness of mind, the feeling that there is so much to know," which marks the true humanistic temperament. A year later, in company with Mr. Charles L. Shadwell, the life-long friend who was to be his literary executor, Pater visited Italy for the first time. Here he applied himself to the direct and diligent study of the monuments of the arts of antiquity and of the Italian Renaissance. The bent

of his own work is henceforth determined. He is now become the frank and thoroughgoing "humanist."

We must remember that by 1865 the Tractarian Movement had spent much of its force as the inspiration or the perturbation of Oxford Fellows. To a young man of Pater's stamp two courses opened. He might give himself up to the influence of men like Maurice and Martineau, endeavouring so to escape from the trend of the current Darwinism, or he might, with certain reservations, accept the scientific doctrines of the evolutionists, ally himself to the æsthetic movement begun by Ruskin and the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, and strive by close and sympathetic study of the humanities, as the

ground for the humanisation and realisation of æsthetic theory, to give to that movement greater consideration and a wider acceptance. The cogency of temperament impelled Pater to the latter course. In 1866 came his first publication, a fragment on Coleridge, in the *Westminster Review*. In its unrevised form this was chiefly concerned with certain humane aspects of Coleridge's philosophic thought. Then, in 1867, came the great essay on "Winckelmann," an exposition of Goethe's so-called naturalism and a defence of the Hellenic or æsthetical view of life. A year later, appreciating the significance of the recent work of William Morris, he wrote his study of "Æsthetic Poetry." Thus by 1869 he

became recognised as the holder and defender of a definite and individual position in all matters artistic. In this year, as Mr. Gosse has recorded, he began wearing, with his frock-coat and top-hat, a silk tie of brilliant apple-green in token that he was "henceforth no longer a provincial philosopher, but a critic linked to London and the modern arts."

From 1869 to 1886, notwithstanding his affiliation with metropolitan criticism, Pater continued to live the more or less cloistered life of a university fellow. Soon he became distinguished as one of the first of Oxford dons to bring a carefully studied taste to the arrangement and decoration of his rooms. He wished always to have by him a few fine and

beautiful objects, but he had none of the instinct of the virtuoso or collector; so it were beautiful, he took as keen a pleasure in the skilful copy of coin, or vase, or picture, as in the priceless original.

Notwithstanding his temperamental shyness and reserve, Walter Pater would seem to have been a very companionable person, always, as he would say, making the most of the "sympathetic ties" of human life. Gradually, and doubtless almost imperceptibly to himself, he became a quietly dominant leader of the intellectual life of the university. With the Oxford youth he was popular, and, like many another bachelor teacher, he seems to have given to his favourite boys a certain wealth of idealised sentiment, which

most men expend otherwise. As has been the way of true humanists, always and everywhere, he was peculiarly sensitive to the spontaneities of young life, with its light affections, with its profounder hero-worships, and, above all, with its unblurred gracefulness of body. In his later "Greek Studies" he recurs delightfully to the visions of Hellenic youth he has found at Thames-side, and to the wandering shade of pagan melancholy he has seen darkening in young English eyes.

Sometimes, however, as happened with Tennyson, his shyness and reserve produced an effect not far from rudeness. His friend of later years, Mr. William Sharp, relates:

"Often I have seen some fellow-don wave a greeting which either he did not see or pretended not to see, and it was rare that his eyes rested on any undergraduate who saluted him unless the evasion would be too obviously discourteous. On the other hand, he would now and again go out of his way to hail and speak cordially to some young fellow in whom he felt a genuine interest."

In a memorial sermon preached by one of Pater's friends, many years after the time of which I am writing, there is an account of his academic character which may properly be quoted here, to correct the current impression that there was over much of Sybaritism in his life:

"Naturally inclined to a certain rigour

in discipline, he was full of excuse for individual cases; and regretted and thought over stern measures more than most members of a governing body can afford to do. The pains he took about his frequent hospitality was a sign of the conscientious thoroughness with which he performed the most trivial actions of life. And this explains the slowness of his composition and the classical smallness of the bulk of his writings.

"To a certain extent, but to a certain extent only, these may be taken as an index to his character, as unveiling the true man. But to those who knew him as he lived among us here, they seemed a sort of disguise. There was the same tenderness, the same tranquillising repose

about his conversation that we find in his writings, the same carefulness in trifles and exactness of expression. But his written works betray little trace of that childlike simplicity, that naïve joyousness, that never-wearying pleasure in animals and their ways, that grave yet half-amused seriousness, also childlike, in which he met the events of the daily routine. His habits were precise and austere, in some respects simple to the last degree—as unlike the current and erroneous impression (which certain passages of his books may leave) as it is possible to conceive; almost the sole luxury he allowed himself was a bowl of rose-leaves, preserved by an old lady in the country from a special receipt, and every

year as a present to him, as a reminder of her friendship. He did not accumulate around him an increasing number of unnecessary props of life, as so many men of sedentary life are unhappily tempted to do. He never smoked, rarely took tonic or medicine of any kind, and has left an example which it would be well if every student could follow, spending his morning in writing or lecturing, some part of the afternoon in correcting the composition of the noon, and in the evening closing up his books entirely—regarding it as folly to attempt to make up for idleness in the day by unseasonable labour at a time when reading men are best in bed."

In the summer throughout his residence

at Oxford Pater sought relief from his lecturing in tours afoot upon the Continent. Indeed, ranging pedestrianism was always his chosen diversion; and one is a little surprised to learn that he sometimes indulged in it to excess, often suffering therefrom weariness and exhaustion. It is characteristic of his reserved and stationary temperament that, fond as he was of Continental wanderings, and in spite of his excellent literary scholarship in German and the Romance languages, he could speak with ease no tongue save his own.

The most important business of the ten years of Pater's life between 1870 and 1880 was the slow and loving composition of most of his best critical essays. In

1873 appeared his first book—indeed the only one before "Marius" in 1885; this was the volume entitled "The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry." In the eight essays which it contained—five reprinted from the magazines, and three new—together with the Preface and Conclusion, Pater contrived to present a summary of the humanistic tendencies of the Renaissance, and with it some special pleading for his own so-called Cyrenaic philosophy of life. This volume, which has proved the most popular of his works, has already appeared in eight editions, no mean record for a book of its class. Together with "Marius," the more ardent Paterians have usually esteemed it their most canonical Scripture.

It was this volume that won Pater the distinction of being satirised in the excellent company of Jowett, Arnold, Ruskin, and Huxley. In 1877 "The New Republic" appeared anonymously, to be fathered not long after upon Mr. W. H. Mallock. The scheme of the book is rather clever. There is a Saturday-to-Monday party at an English country house. The persons who have been gathered dispute freely of faith, culture, philosophy, and life, and the inconclusiveness of the debate is made to burlesque the futility of various contemporary intellectual movements. Pater is represented by Mr. Rose, a "pre-Raphaelite" with a very pale face and very heavy moustache. In the

first volume he is a rather silentious person who spends most of his time looking out of the window at sunsets, or helping at his tasks a rosy-cheeked boy with fair golden hair. But in the second volume he takes advantage of a psychological moment to soliloquise dreamily, somewhat to the weariness of the company, concerning the lesson of the art of the Renaissance, the glorification of sensation. His talk is a skilful *cento* of phrases deftly conveyed from Pater's "Conclusion" to The Renaissance, and his characteristic diction, cadence, and allusiveness are parodied with considerable felicity. His so-called "paganism" is also introduced, and the well-meaning but un-

inspired Lady Ambrose is made to exclaim, upon the titillation of her lady-like sensibility: "What an odd man Mr. Rose is! He always seems to talk of everybody as if they had no clothes on." The satire, as a whole, is not always pleasant, and often it is unjust; but it serves to show the way in which Pater has been taken by many people, perverse indeed, yet not without some show of sanity to their credit.

After the publication of the "Renaissance" Pater continued his care-taking composition at the average rate of two studies each year. By 1881 the majority of his essays in art and letters had been written and printed in the magazines. The bulk of his work done after that year

is comprised in "Marius," "Plato and Platonism," "Imaginary Portraits," and other imaginative or philosophic studies resembling them.

III

CRITICISM OF ART AND LETTERS

One sometimes thinks that the nineteenth century was never completely cured of that world-malady of its middle age which became chronic from the first romantic green-sickness of its youth. Among the obscurer and less remarked symptoms of this disease was its easy catholicity of taste, its lack of normal narrowness in literary matters. There was something virile, in spite of limitations, in an age which could say with Pepys that "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was "the foolishest play" that ever it saw. In the surcease of bitter, bookish dislikes and complacent deprecia-

tions, in the profuse geniality of literary judgments the nineteenth in its maturity was the Hamlet of the centuries. Of this affable, retrospective turn in the mind of his age Walter Pater is an excellent example. One of the first impressions which the considerate reader derives from his criticism is that of the absence from it of the note of personal antipathy; and this is likely to be coupled with a perception of the wide area of bookland which it drains.

Pater was a man of adventurous mental temperament, and in those long, leisurely years at Oxford he voyaged through strange, and sometimes perilous, seas of thought. He read voluminously; and preserved from his reading, by the

aid of innumerable little squares of paper, immense stores of impressions and ideas. The reader of his essays will find therein not only a sympathetic, but even a respectably exact, knowledge of enough departments of scholarship to provide a decent outfit of mental furniture for some half-dozen academic specialists. He knew his English, Continental, Latin, and Greek literature as a scholar knows them; of philosophy, both ancient and modern, he possessed a knowledge more than usually close, and much more than usually realising; and in art he was a connoisseur. He devoted his life to the pursuit of that "comparative literature," or *Culturgeschichte,* which has been one of the late developments of the Baconian

organisation of learning. But he brought to his study none of the *à priori* prepossessions, Hegelian, Darwinian, or what not, which so many scholars have lugged into this field. Rather he approached history, philosophy, literature, art in the temper of the old, all-embracing humanism, striving to put flesh on old bones, to give to ancient lives a vivid personal realisation, so as to fulfil his own. Hence it came about that, while his work is in a sense bookish, it was, nevertheless, strangely vital and close to the trend of the general life. He undertook the "compellation," as old writers say, of the experience of the Western World. He held as the essence of his humanism the belief that "nothing which has ever inter-

ested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality; no language they have spoken, no oracle beside which they have hushed their voices, no dream which has once been entertained by actual human minds, nothing about which they have been passionate or expended time and zeal." So holding fast this old doctrine of *nihil humani alienum,* he strove by retrospective generalisation upon the past life of the world not to minimise the actual details of personal life, but to enrich them with the significance of the whole; not to disown the present, but to chasten to-day by the solemn procession of yesterdays. It is hard to see what worthier end scholarship could propose to herself.

Although Pater carried to his multifarious studies no rigid metaphysical notions, he was not slow to formulate, and to express in the "Renaissance," certain clear opinions upon the method of æsthetics and the function of art. Some consideration of these must precede any attention to the details of his literary and artistic criticism.

The man who had such care for things tangible and visible, who, like Montaigne, had come to esteem the more doctrinaire philosophy of his day nothing better than poetry sophisticated, will have none of any æsthetic theory which may tend to fix too stolidly the shy spirit of beauty. He will admit to his court, with their æsthetic formulæ and theoretic distinctions, Kant

and Hegel and Schiller and Cousin and Ruskin; but he will not suffer them to enshroud, with any stiff, academic drapery of definition, the pure line and bright colour of the beauty he would contemplate.

"Beauty," he tells us, "like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract, but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not a universal formula for it, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of æsthetics."

While this forbids him to discuss ulti-

mate metaphysical theories of beauty, it is no bar to reflection upon the nature and function of art; and it was in this field that Pater deployed as an æsthetic philosopher. When his theorising is reduced to its simplest terms it may be stated in brief compass. Art, he held, is the expression of the beauty which is found in the world by the imaginative vision; its purpose is the enrichment of life.

The Ruskinian theory, as sometimes interpreted, that art is a kind of serving-maid to piety, was odious to him. But while he contends that the business of art is simply to afford us intense and noble pleasure, later in "Marius" he expressly affirms that, at its highest, this pleasure

cannot fail to furnish an ethical motive and impulse.

Within these broad outlines he comprehended many refinements of æsthetic theory. Of these the one usually thought most characteristic of Pater, against which the embattled hosts of criticism have advanced, is the notion stated most clearly in "The School of Giorgione," that the norm of art, the limiting form toward which all good art constantly tends, is music; that lyrical poetry, by reason of its musicalness, is the highest form of literature; that the other arts are but other kinds of musical harmony; that architecture, even, is but music petrified, a harmony in stone. It must be confessed that even in "The Renaissance"

Pater does not keep quite consistently to his theory. At times he seems, like Poe or Baudelaire, to choose music as his typical art because of its fluidity or ethereality, its way of weaving mystical spells about our mood, its power of catching directly at emotion, and of reproducing it with the slightest mediation of material symbols and with the least demand for intellectual interpretation. At other times he shifts his point of view until it is the sensuousness of music that we see most clearly. Again music will be used in a Platonic sense in which the intellectual element of harmony is preponderant. Here it is the ordered symphonies of art he is thinking of; their usefulness in the precipitation of cloudy moods, or as a

homœopathic cure for morbid enthusiasm. But as a strict and, as it were, logarhythmic structure is equally necessary to all arts, he is led sometimes to a kind of classical and Aristotelian æsthetic, with a severe insistence upon "structure," into which few other expounders of the "musical" theory of art would care to follow him. This theory is nowhere presented systematically, and in the context where the fragments of it occur they are usually unimpeachable; yet the drift of it all has proved liable to misconception. It is a delicate affair to hold that because music is the most purely and directly suggestive of the arts, it is, therefore, the most "spiritual." One cannot maintain this unless he is also prepared to hold that clear ideas

in themselves are less "of the spirit" than undefined emotions, and become spiritualised as they grow vague. This contention, which is so dear to the happy hearts of some of our modern mystics, is, when stated in this form, clearly rubbish.

But by such perennial, metaphysical pothers as this Pater was not greatly disturbed. All he sought was some formula for an art which should express, as he at that time conceived Goethe's to express it, the objective variety of modern life, its subtile and complex inwardness. In the essay on Winckelmann he puts the case thus:

"For us necessity is not, as of old, a sort of mythological personage without us, with whom we can do warfare; it is a

magic web woven through and through us, like that magnetic system of which modern science speaks, penetrating us with a network subtiler than our subtilest nerves, yet bearing in it the central forces of the world. Can art express this with Hellenic blitheness and originality?" *

This was the question which Pater set himself to answer step by step, in his specific criticisms of painters, prosemen, and poets. It is in the actual application, in his intimately sympathetic approach, in his untiring care of analysis that this point of view became effective in criticism.

* The pervasiveness of such thought is strikingly illustrated in that formula of the "*nouvelle humanisme*" for which M. Gregh stands in France: *Nous devons imiter les Grecs, nos maîtres, en faisant ça qu'ils feraient, s'ils ressuscitaient parmi nous.*

Pater's art criticism was never exclusively concerned either with the material or with the ideal aspects of art. It was the misty mid-region of "expressiveness" that he took for his peculiar province. With his respect for the bodily eye he was always—in specific criticism as in the general theory—peculiarly sensitive to the purely sensuous beauty of line and colour in painting, curve in sculpture, light and shade in architecture, and even to the exquisite prettiness or bizarre quaintness of articles of *vertu*. He cared more than most critics for chryselephantine richness, for the luxury of ivory and gold; and in insisting upon this liking, especially in the later "Greek Studies," he did good service in balancing the abstracting tendency,

which, since Lessing, had tended to over-refine most judgments passed upon art. But, on the other hand, he never went so far in this direction as to flatter mere purse-proud vertuosity. He never lost sight of the world of truth under that overworked formula, "the typical significance of pure form." Not Michelangelo, not Walt Whitman even, could have realised more fully the supremacy in the imaginative world of the undraped male figure.

The most characteristic and stimulating trait in Pater's art criticism is his ability to take any given work of art and express from it, and elaborate, all those vivid, human intimations, vague half-reminiscences, or visionary, historic adum-

brations which with most of us form the ground of our deepest pleasures, but which, in most cases, can never become articulate. He does not do this, as some have done it, by a single act of the interpretative imagination disclosing the object and its relations for us as if in a sudden gleam of white light. Rather, he studies history, biography, letters, fragmentary remains, all the flotsam and jetsam of the past, and revives the atmosphere, or—to use a word savouring of the shop—the *milieu* of the artist; then he subjects the painter's work to a kind of long, mystic meditation, until by virtue of his mediumship we behold the very spirit of it, and even partake of the mood wherein it was created. He chose

by preference the work of fluid, romantic periods of transition foreshadowing the complexity of his own time—the "anxious and wistful" ages of Greece, Hellenizing Rome, Renaissance Italy, Italianate France and England, Gallicizing Germany. In so doing he often incurred the risk of reading himself into his subject. But actual transgression in this respect is the exception, not the rule. The recognition of the truth of most of his interpretations, even the more subtile, comes with instantaneous conviction to the mind of the judicious and attentive reader.

In all his work of this sort one paragraph, in its mellow and musical cadence, in its close and adroit felicity of characterisation, and in its charm of historic

suggestiveness, is quite peerless. It has been quoted in season and out; often it has evoked the foolish face of praise, yet no study of Pater could portray his temperament, or convey the peculiar quality of his work at its perfection, which failed to recall to the reader the incomparable passage on Leonardo Da Vinci's *La Gioconda:*

"The presence that thus rose so strangely beside the waters is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all the ends of the world are come and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries

and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep

seas and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern thought has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by and summing up in itself all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea."

The imaginative interpretation of the "sentiment" of pictorial and plastic art can go no further safely. This is the supreme example of Pater's characteristic elaboration of "expressiveness."

It is fairly accurate to affirm that Pater's literary criticism was in the tradition which found its typical expression in the "Causeries de Lundi." Sainte-Beuve's affair was, in the best sense, atmospheric criticism, the criticism of knowledge, of the true connoisseur. He was a myriad-minded humanist, all things to all men, yet a historian withal, a psychologist, and a trained codifier of temperaments. Thus two diverse schools of criticism have acclaimed him master. The

impressionistic dilettante finds in the personal tone of Sainte-Beuve's work warrant for the display of his own fancies; while the severer academic critic finds therein inspiration to painstaking study and analysis, or even to operose compilation. But, irrespective of such distinctions and of the abuse of his method, Sainte-Beuve still stands as the teacher of much that is most humane, genial, and wise in the criticism of our time. His work is the enduring answer to the profane charges which the ceaseless flow of literary tittle-tattle or rhodomontade has drawn down upon all critical writing.

Pater was an early student of Sainte-Beuve, and, as the sort of criticism he found in his pages was in harmony with

his own temperament and scholarly horizon, he did not delay to adopt much of his method. But in one respect Pater's critical writing was as much in the best English traditions of Coleridge and Lamb and Hazlitt—of good criticism everywhere—as in the mould of Sainte-Beuve. He had a mind capable of being directly and deeply moved by the presence of beauty in a piece of literature, and peculiarly responsive to the distinctive element of personality in it. He took the pains first of all to realise and discriminate his own impressions. Hence he was, together with the earlier romantic critics, among the most proficient masters of the art of literary interpretation, as he himself expounds it:

"The function of the æsthetic critic is to distinguish, analyse, and separate from its adjuncts the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book produces the special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of the impression is and under what conditions it is experienced."

As all Pater's criticism is essentially of one piece, and in a special sense the criticism of personality in literature, it may be suggestive to marshal, mediævalwise, all the worthes of whom he has extended appreciations, either complete in themselves or subsidiary to some other study. They come thronging, we may imagine, a goodly company, infinitely various, but not uncongenial.

As befits his dignity, the procession may be headed by the Emperor Marcus Aurelius placidly engaged in Stoic meditation, closely followed by Zeno and Pythagoras. Near by, Apuleius, Lucian, and Montaigne chat amiably and wisely, interrupted now and again by some stuttered, lambent witticism from Elia, who, nevertheless, shows quite as much predilection for the more solemn company of Euripides and Sir Thomas Browne. Socrates comes genially, surrounded by questioning youths; and Plato, with Giordano Bruno, and Count Pico of Mirandola hanging upon his words, discourses musically as Apollo's lute. In the intervals of his speech Coleridge takes up the thread not unacceptably, though he de-

sists at times to discuss such more sublunary matters as poetic diction with Ronsard, Du Bellay, and Wordsworth. Shakespeare, Michelangelo, and Goethe come together in somewhat Olympian state. Yet none is more keenly alive to all that passes in the company; Shakespeare, we may fancy, passing many a significant comment with Browning, Goethe never losing sight of Winckelmann, and Michelangelo often looking reverently toward Dante, who walks sombrely apart. Rossetti and William Morris, Octave Feuillet and Prosper Mérimée sort much by themselves. Last of the line come Pascal and Amiel, holding great argument of faith and doubt; careless of the pace, or, perhaps, unable to hold it, they

have lagged far behind. All about are figures and faces equally real, yet whose names are not in the histories: Denys L'Auxerrois, Sebastian Van Storck, Gaston de Latour, Marius the Epicurean.

Fantastic as it may seem, some such Chaucerian gathering as this best conveys the final impression of Walter Pater's criticism. But to make the roll completely comprehensive we should have to include many men—Blake, for instance, of whom there are no formal appreciations, yet to whom there are so many luminous passing allusions that exhaustive interpretations of their writing might almost be pieced together. In all Pater's work, on the other hand, certain English writers

are, as the ancient and useful Hibernianism goes, conspicuous by their absence, even as the ground for a stray allusion. Some of these—Shelley, for example—might perhaps have received a formal appreciation by Pater had longer life been granted him. Others, like Swift or Johnson, the types of somewhat portly virility in our literature, seem avoided by deliberate choice. For all the earlier and cruder periods of literature, unless powerfully informed by some aspiring romantic spirit, his sympathy, in spite of his humanism, was limited. He has little to say of the ninth century or of the fourteenth. But this is not to be charged against him as unfortunate limitation. Even the myriad-minded humanist cannot concern

himself with everything, and, even in criticism, elective affinities have their use.

As in Pater's criticism of art, so in that of literature the chief charm is the engaging intimacy of understanding. He wrote, to adapt Wordsworth's phrase, "with his eye on the document." In his diligent, cosmopolitan reading he preserved upon his little squares of paper the flashes of interpretative intuition and sympathy which come swarmingly but evanescently to the ripe and responsive reader. But these were never fitted together hastily or at haphazard. He never made a crazy-quilt of his notes. Nor did he ever attempt, as some have done, to disembowel his theme—to tear the heart out of it. It seems to have been his way, when

this harvest of notes was duly garnered, to brood over his subject in a long, analytical scrutiny, until, with a clear and complete vision of the whole in his mind, each piece of suggestive detail would fall into its rightful place and relation. This formative process was aided by—as it culminated in—a rare power of literary generalisation. Who but he, for example, could have written those parallel studies of Greek art and religion, "Demeter" and "Dionysus"? What other among contemporary critics could have traced the slow evolution of an ancient popular mythos so cunningly and subtilely, with such a convincing embodiment of stray hints of meaning, and such a full imaginative realisation of old-world dream.

It was by virtue of the same method strictly followed through all its stages that he produced his memorable literary judgments. It was thus that he contrived such satisfactory critical essays as that which displays Shakespeare's English kings as protagonists of the irony of kingship, types of average human nature flung with wonderfully dramatic effect into the vortex of great events; or that which portrays Sir Thomas Browne as the supreme expression of the sombre, thaumaturgic, atrabilious, yet loquacious mood of his century; or those which bring us to know Pico Mirandola with his beauty and his aureate, Platonic visions, and the heart of Wordsworth in the passion and mysticity of the best of his

poetry. Other critics may have surpassed him in dash and brilliancy of attack; a very few, perhaps, were superior in profound penetration into the depths of the greatest natures; but in the power of sympathetic interpretation of the diverse writers whom, at some point, his temperament touched, and in the gift of phrasing perfectly subtile shades of his meaning, Walter Pater had no superiors and few peers.

It is, of course, impossible to dwell long upon this branch of Mr. Pater's work without bringing it into comparison with that of the man whom recent English literary opinion has generally recognised as its master. It is neither possible nor desirable to make a formal comparison

between Mr. Pater and Mr. Arnold, or to draw up an estimate to scale, but it may not be wholly idle to notice some points of opposition.

If we place Arnold's essay upon Marcus Aurelius beside those chapters of "Marius"—the twelfth to the fifteenth—which deal with the same theme, the difference will be apparent. And this difference, so obvious here in the treatment of a single subject, may be traced almost as easily in all their critical writing. Pater's sensibilities seem the keener, and, as is to be expected from his more retired and academic life, his general scholarship is better, his information more detailed and exact. He had more than Arnold of that personal knowledge of many remote

minor writers which is essential to the full atmospheric criticism of their more famous contemporaries. One feels that, save for occasional excursions to the shrine of some minor writer of "distinction," Arnold kept more strictly to the highroad of literature, and in so doing lost a little in knowledge of the country. On the other hand, Pater's criticism never moves with the bright speed of Arnold's. It is no clear, luciferous stream of prose with the sunlight of humour playing upon its surface and penetrating its depths. This is partly a matter of style, of which we shall presently have to speak, but, more than that, it is the result of a fundamental diversity in critical mood and method. Arnold dealt more in broad,

stoical generalisations, "nobleness of soul," "sweet reasonableness," "sweetness and light," and other "chief and principal things" which are pregnant and luminous only so far as the reader shares in the particular quality. Notwithstanding his struggles of faith, his foregatherings with Obermann and Heine, he was always Arnold of Rugby's son. He never lost a certain beneficent singleness of mind. Beside him Pater was more of the myriad-minded humanist, more like that typical humanist of the old time, Dr. Thomas Browne of Norwich, of a constitution so general that it consorts and sympathises with all things.

IV

PHILOSOPHIC FICTION AND THE ART OF STYLE

Although in the preceding account we have viewed by anticipation much that came after, we must now revert to 1881 to pick up the chronological thread of our author's life. If the obliging reader will take the trouble to glance at the bibliographical table of Mr. Pater's life and work he will notice that, with the single exception of the essay upon Rossetti, written in 1883, the years from 1881 to 1885 were given to the composition of his masterpiece, "Marius the Epicurean." Even with the abundant leisure afforded by his academic life, and with the additional advantage of the winter of 1882

spent in Rome, it is a wonder that a work so full of significant detail, so assiduously filed and polished, so maturely ripened, could have been carried to completion within even that ample time. At any rate, so exacting was the labour that nothing else was done by Pater within those years to need our attention.

The publication of "Marius" in 1885, coming after the Renaissance and the long series of notable magazine essays, finally established Pater's reputation as a writer of very unusual quality and distinction. It was received almost everywhere with the highest terms of respect in the professional reviewer's phrase-book, and at the hands of at least two critics, Mr. Sharp in the *Athenæum* and Mr. Wood-

berry in the *Nation,* it met something like adequate and discriminating appreciation. It was felt at once by discriminating readers that Marius himself was not so much an ancient Epicurean, or even the perennial type of the æsthetic moralist, as the protagonist of a certain tendency which the author held to be vital in the thoughtful life of his own age; or, perhaps, a lyrical personage feigned for purposes of self-explanation. It was upon this ground that the book deserved and found recognition. But this matter of the new Cyrenaicism or the æsthetical conduct of life is best deferred to a later chapter. All that need be done now is to notice some of the more obvious qualities of the book.

Persons of taste and cultivation were attracted to "Marius" chiefly by three traits: by the richness of the scholarship displayed in it, by the power of the interpretative imagination — which conceived the life of Marius sharply and clearly amid his so various environment, subordinating each learned and archæological detail to its due place in the whole composition—and by its suave and seductive grace of style. The deftly inlaid episodes, like that beautifully light and poetic version of "Cupid and Psyche" done out of Apuleius, or the eloquent oration of Aurelius, cunningly developed out of his Meditations, were done on the highest level of Pater's art. But nowhere is his peculiar ability seen to better advantage than in

the delicious Socratic dialogue between Lucian and Hermotimus. Berkeley or Landor, even FitzGerald, never handled the form better. Indeed it might almost have been done by Plato himself. There is in it the tortuous yet steady progression of thought relieved by dramatic turns and quick, subtile reverses, which is the prime charm of form in Plato's art. The doctrinaire boy Hermotimus, caught in the logical net by the systematic scepticism of Lucian, struggles as naturally and ineffectually as Crito or Protagoras enmeshed by Socrates. And it is all presented in an admirably concrete and analogical style, enlivened by little apologues quite in the manner of Plato.

After the publication of "Marius,"

slight changes may be seen in the manner of Pater's life and in the direction of his literary activities. In 1886 he took a house at Kensington. From this time on he came more and more to be in demand as a lecturer and as a reviewer extraordinary of new books of a kind that appealed to him. In the period of his residence at Kensington he contributed some twenty long and careful review articles, both signed and unsigned, to the *Guardian,* the *Nineteenth Century,* the *Pall Mall Gazette,* and the *Athenæum.* Some of these, like the notice of Mrs. Ward's "Amiel's Journal," are little essays or appreciations, quite in his familiar vein. While the majority are occasional papers of small permanent interest, none is de-

void of very considerable suggestiveness to the critic of Pater's personality and literary product. As a reviewer he was genial, sympathetic, friendly; eager to praise and loth to censure, often passing in silence defects which he could not have failed to observe. The review of "Robert Elsmere," for example, is typical of all. Here, as in all his reviews of fiction, Pater is unaffectedly delighted with the people and their story, and has no excessive concern for social or theological problems which may be involved in the plot. But it is important to notice that what little he does have to say concerning this last matter is in a somewhat deprecatory and churchman-like vein. The style of these papers is also remarkable. It is, of

course, less carefully wrought than usual with him, more brisk and buoyant, and written with a more running pen. But at times, when led by habit into a long sentence, without the time for his wonted phlegmatic correction, he produced periods so obscure and cumbersome as to be unparalleled elsewhere in his work.

One of the effects of the long labour of "Marius" was to develop the creative element of Pater's genius, to increase his skill at a certain sort of narrative. With the exception of "The Child in the House," printed in a magazine in 1878, all of his work to 1881 had consisted in the criticism or interpretation of art and letters. As we have seen, a creative element was involved even in this; but with

"Marius" he came to be a writer of imaginative philosophic studies, cast in the form of uneventful fiction. Afterward came the series of four imaginary portraits, "A Prince of Court Painters," "Denys L'Auxerrois," "Sebastian Van Storck," and "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," all printed in *Macmillan's Magazine* from 1885 to 1887, and collected into a volume in the latter year. Then in 1888, in the same magazine, came the five chapters of "Gaston de Latour," which have brought delight to many. In 1889 he wrote a very similar study, one of his rarest achievements in poetic symbolism, "Hippolytus Unveiled." "Emerald Uthwart," printed in 1892, was nearest of all to the ordinary type of fiction in which things happen,

and least heavily freighted with philosophic lore. Finally, in 1893, appeared that delightfully suggestive fantasy of the after-movement of the Hellenic spirit, "Apollo in Picardy."

To sympathetic readers, who fell upon these studies damp from the press, there came upon the instant a perception of their beauty and power which set them far apart from the mass of current literature. And, indeed, they are by no means the least enduring part of Pater's work. They contain many passages of sound and suggestive artistic, literary, or philosophic criticism, and much of the imaginative, poetic criticism of life which is the business of creative literature. Hippolytus, through all his ardent youth, de-

voted to the pursuit of remote and difficult wisdom; Sebastian Van Storck, the remorseless, Spinozistic idealist, who, by forsaking the actual humanities of life, comes to strange grief—these and the rest are rare but universal types. They have a special meaning to modern young men of an uncommercial turn. Finally, it is in these portraits and fantasies that the Pateresque style is found in its most characteristic and elaborate individuality.

It is with diffidence and concern that one approaches a theme which, as many critics would assert, involves Pater's chief merit and distinction, and, as some of the wicked hold, his peculiar offence — his style or literary manner. In 1888 his

famous essay on "Style" was published in the *Fortnightly Review,* to be printed a year later as the initial or tonic paper in his collected "Appreciations." This, then, is the logical and chronological place in which to take some account of his stylistic theory and practice. This account may perhaps fulfil our impression of his work hitherto, and may bridge the way to a final summary of his philosophy of life.

The essay on "Style" is a plea for the cultivation of consciously artistic and scholarly prose to offset the hasty, slapdash impressionism, which Pater felt to be the cardinal sin of the prose of his time. With Flaubert for his master and model, he writes both soundly and seduc-

tively of "charm and lucid order and labour of the file." The ends of style he held to be beauty and expressiveness. He would have agreed with Spencer that the fundamental principle of it is the economy of attention, and with Michelangelo that it consists in the purgation of superfluities; but, with a rather unusually complex notion of the meaning of "beauty" and "expressiveness," he demanded more of prose style than might at first seem to be involved in those famous formulæ. Pater's artistic ideal demanded full and *precise* truth in the expression of his thought. This meant the thoughtful manipulation of sentences into as exact conformity as might be with the subtile intentions of his own mind. This, he

taught, might be attained by a fourfold effort: by closely meditated architectonic structure to attain the *ordo concatenatioque veri;* by scholarly advantage taken of the minutest principles of syntax; by an attention to musical cadence, so to work upon the mood of the reader as to bring it to accord with the writer's mood; and, finally, by an unflagging quest of the proper word, the one predestined mate for each single meaning.

To look at the question from a more technical point of view, Pater's ideal of a good style, like all such theories, was a matter mainly of two things—sentence structure and diction. Of the first he had said, in a sentence of a form singularly illustrative of its content: "The blithe,

crisp sentence, decisive as a child's expression of its needs, may alternate with the long-contending, victoriously intricate sentence, the sentence born with the integrity of a single word, relieving the sort of sentence in which, if you look closely, you can see much contrivance, much adjustment to bring a highly qualified matter into compass at one view."

As for that one inevitable word, Pater saw that in holding this to be actually attainable, Flaubert had entered upon a belief which must ultimately bring him to despair. No matter how proper the words, mere linguistic symbols, with all their wealth of association, can never impart all the fulness of the creative idea, with its warmth and colour and vital glow,

its silver lights and silences. But he held, nevertheless, that like the philosophic pursuit of truth, irrespective of the attainment or non-attainment of the absolute, the artistic quest of the one veracious word brought its own reward. In short, Pater's effort was always directed toward the attainment of fine and full veracity, "the whole truth." It is a thousand pities that the high-falutin ravage of some of his imitators has brought discredit upon Pater. This confused injustice is doubtless a mark of an intellectual flabbiness incapable of appreciating the austerity of mind which, in Pater's case, lay under the manner.

This was Pater's theory of style, and his practice shows a much stricter agree-

ment with it than is often to be found between these two discordant sisters. Pater's prose is obviously not Attic prose. Matthew Arnold and Cardinal Newman, among the Victorians, came nearer to that, and how different they are from Pater! Nor is it Asiatic; it has little of De Quincey's florid luxuriance, his Ciceronian rhythms, and Persian pomp. To keep to the figure for suggestion rather than definition, Pater's style is African in its flavour. It is a characteristic product of an Alexandrine society, too urbane ever to be grandiloquent, yet too curious in its scholarship, too profuse of its sympathies to be quite content with simple, Addisonian clarity.

Walter Pater might have said with an

essayist of old time: "To me a *cursus philosophicus* is an impertinency in folio and the reading of it a laborious idleness." His own work was always in the form of the essay; for, in a very real sense, the chapters of "Marius" or "Plato and Platonism" are essays at many subjects. Now, like the eclogue in poetry, the essay has many and peculiar advantages for him who would arrive as near as may be to perfection of form. It is long enough to afford an orderly and fairly comprehensive view of its subject, and so short as to admit of repeated polishings and the most minute care for all the smallest details of composition. Of this property in his form Pater took conscientious advantage. He wrote, it is said, with the

most painful toiling; sometimes his work produced such utter exhaustion that—with his mind "lined with black," as old Burton would say—he could find no good in his most perfect periods. The method of his composition has been often recounted. The first draft of an essay was written upon specially prepared paper with the lines far apart, each word widely detached from its fellows. Then he would go over and over it, filling in between the lines, qualifying, amplifying, intensifying, until the page brimmed over with words. Then he would copy it out in the same way as at first, and begin the process of revision anew. This he would do many times, until the result satisfied him in sufficient measure for publication.

But sometimes, before this consummation, he would have the galley-proofs of an essay struck off at his own expense, that by actually seeing his work in type he might revise or rearrange it to better advantage. He has been called by some a slovenly writer, but while there are certain mannerisms in his work which, from one point of view, might seem to give some colour of truth to this characterisation, it is, nevertheless, a misconception of his quality. There are singularly few evidences of actual carelessness anywhere in his writings.

Pater was, indeed, pre-eminently a scholarly writer. This does not mean that he was quite a purist. He was not above coining a form if it served his turn,

and for certain French words and relative constructions he had a fondness hardly warranted under the self-denying ordinance of the purist. But he was a scholarly writer in his use of the rich resources of the English tongue. He plays deftly, for example, with the archaic, radical meaning of words like *express, entertain,* or *mortified,* never using the inherent, hidden meaning so crassly as to perturb the untutored reader, yet always with a retrospective, pictorial turn which delights the scholar. Like all good writers he was exquisitely sensitive to the expressive shading and colour of language. With him, as with Marius, "his general sense of a fitness and beauty in words became effective in daintily pliant sen-

tences, with all sorts of felicitous linking of figure to abstraction."

This linking of figure to abstraction is, perhaps, the most salient feature of Pater's style. Even when treating philosophic subjects the visible is everywhere predominant in his pages. Beautiful objects, landscapes, persons are always his primary interest; but these are so sublimated by the chrysopoetic alchemy of his style that they often attain a profound suggestiveness unattainable in more abstract composition. He had, indeed, something of the lyric pantheism which can make the flower of the field or the cloud in the sky or a stranger's face vehicles of personal sentiment and passion.

It was largely by virtue of this gift that he was enabled to express his intimacies of thought and observation, and so to make a certain subtile intimacy the chief characteristic of his writing. It was thus that he arrived at what he defined in another as "That impress of a personal quality, a profound expressiveness, what the French call *intimité*, by which is meant some subtile sense of originality—the seal on a man's work of what is most inward and peculiar in his moods and manner of apprehension: it is what we call expression carried to its highest intensity of degree." In this respect Pater's mood and manner are as every true artist's must be, essentially unique. Other men can produce the subtile, intimate, Pateresque

effect once in a while, but he alone could do it continuously and consistently, with a singular cumulative felicity.

On the other hand, his manner of composition had its grave disadvantages. It can be maintained, with much assurance, that it would have been better for Pater had he, as a young man, been driven by some temporal necessity to write rapidly under pressure. The most noticeable quality of his style is the very opposite of *verve*.

His work as a whole lacks energy, speed, carrying power. He had a parenthetical mind. The very Genius of Qualification followed him through all his thinking. And, all too often in his writing, instead of selecting from among the

possible qualifications of his idea, he gives them all. Hence came the somewhat gelatinous quality of his style in his less inspired moments. It is translucent, shimmering with colour, but not firm, transparent, crystalline; yet, if by this peculiar individuality of his manner he loses in influence with the running reader, it may be that he makes a corresponding and compensating gain with the more attentive student in his closet. His excessive modification is often to his reader truly a delightful *modification*—a making of mood. And though he is a dangerous pattern of style for the young writer when he appends modifying clause after clause to the wrong side of the proper predicate, yet even in these loose periods,

he attains, by virtue of their very laxity, a kind of languorous cadence very suitable to his elegiac prose. Only it must be confessed that Pater is not an author to read straight through. Even the most sympathetic reader—perhaps because of some original sin of taste in him—will become at last a little cloyed by such unrelieved intimacy. He will yearn for reading that is rude and breezy, and sigh for the lusty company of Nick Bottom, or Sancho Panza, or Tom Jones.

Yet it is not, as some have thought, solemnity of which the reader is weary. For Pater, though never witty, is essentially a humourous writer. This may seem a dark saying, but the true admirer of Pater will readily understand what is

meant. There is always behind his page a subtile and sustained recognition of an endless incongruity in the scheme of things. In real life he was, as we have seen, gleeful and childlike in the playful simplicity of his humour; yet, in his work, his mood, though still humourous, or, at least, vaguely humoursome, becomes as mature and inscrutable as the smile of Mona Lisa. It is hard to say whether it is humour just ready to sadden into pathos or pathos about to gleam into humour. Carlyle and Lamb had that mingling, too, but with them the alternate change was constantly occurring, while with Pater it almost never occurred. His normal mood, like Lady Lisa's smile, was delicately poised between sadness and mirth. Per-

haps it was another symbol of "the modern idea."

We are never tired of saying that imaginative prose is the typical art of our time; that by virtue of its flexible expressiveness it is best fitted to portray inward circumstance of complexity and contradiction. It is as a writer of such prose as this that Pater is a significant figure in English literary history. If his style is not the briskest and most strenuous, because the strain of life he stands for is not the briskest and most strenuous, is it for that any the less good style? The final question, can art become permanent by perfect expressiveness alone? may be left open. But surely it is by virtue of just such perfect expressiveness that Pater's

eight volumes are likely to remain a treasure "for the delighted reading of a scholar, willing to ponder at leisure, to make his way slowly and understand."

V

"THE NEW CYRENAICISM"

After the publication of "The Renaissance" in 1873, the reviews, becoming aware of the religious and philosophic scepticism which it implied, and the peculiar theory of ethics which it explicitly defended, speedily bestowed upon its author the then (and still) reproachful name of "Hedonist." Fearful of misunderstanding, Pater, in 1877, withdrew the summary "Conclusion" from the second edition. Then in "Marius," and especially in the chapter entitled "The New Cyrenaicism," he attempted a more elaborate exposition and defence of his beliefs. Finally, in 1888, in the third edition of "The Renaissance," he reinstated that

portentous "Conclusion," with slight changes, he says, to bring it nearer to his original meaning, but really, one fancies, to his meaning as modified by maturity. Henceforth his "Cyrenaicism" was fairly understood, and respected accordingly. It should be of advantage to us, then, to study Pater's philosophy of life as a whole under this self-chosen name. This should aid one to conceive more clearly the purport and development of his opinions, and it should help one to a better understanding of the intricate, Pateresque tendency in recent life and letters.

Perhaps not every schoolboy knows that Cyrenaicism was a system of thought and conduct bred in the mind of Aristippus of Cyrene. This person, who was a

contemporary of Socrates, held that all knowledge is relative to the perceiving mind, that we can never really know the thing in itself, that, since this is the case, the chief end of life should be the pursuit of high intellectual pleasure or well-being in an enduring state of contentment. A follower of Aristippus, one Euhemerus, developed his system into a very rationalistic philosophy of religion; another, Hegesias, developed it into a kind of ideal pessimism, as Schopenhauer and Leopardi did later. Hegesias became known by the appellation of "Persuader-to-Death," from the disconcerting fact that his class in philosophy was more than decimated by suicide of its members. But in the thought of its founder the Cyrenaic sys-

tem had greater affinities with idealism of the more buoyant sort, and, as a matter of fact, Aristippus before he died became practically a member of the Socratic school. All these tendencies in order were exemplified in the course taken by the Cyrenaicism of Walter Pater.

As we have seen, there were always traceable in him two conflicting mental dispositions. There was an abstracting, idealising, centripetal motive, tending to Puritanism or Pantheism in religion, counterbalanced by a more materialistic centrifugal force that found its natural religious affinities in very diverse quarters, in polytheistic Paganism, in Catholicism, or even in agnosticism. But while these tendencies may be distinguished by

a theoretical analysis, practically they were merged into indivisible, inalienable unity by the fusing power of personality. In his younger days he was, like Marius, "a materialist with something of the temper of a devotee."

But this twy-formed temperament, nourished on curious philosophic studies, led him into scepticism. The chief contention of the "Conclusion" to "The Renaissance" is that old one of the vanity of dogmatising. After much preoccupation with the divisions of the sensible and the intelligible worlds, with the opposition of relative and absolute truth, he is led at last to distrust even that measure of absolute truth which may be asserted to be inherent in the very constitution of mind

as mind. Of late the extension of psychology and the rise of the philosophic movement, which has taken for its watchword "Back to Kant!" has made a belief in this measure of universality tolerably easy. But in the sixties and early seventies, when Darwinism, still imperfectly understood, had all the romantic charm of a new cosmic theory, when Mill and Huxley were in their prime and German idealism had fallen into its dotage, avoidance of this sort of philosophic scepticism was a more difficult matter—practically impossible for those temperamentally inclined toward it. Pater at the time of writing the "Renaissance" did not avoid it. He fell to pondering upon the eternal flux of things, until not Heraclitus him-

self could have expressed the shorelessness of the strange seas of thought more strikingly. In the "Conclusion" he writes:

"Or if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye and fading of colour from the wall—the movement of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest—but the race of the mid-stream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. At first sight, experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But

when reflection begins to act upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like a trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further; the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each of us by that thick wall of personality,

through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. Analysis goes a step further still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it, being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To

such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves."

It must be confessed that the first effect of such a passage as this is but to produce a disturbing sense of the shiftiness of thought. It seems the expression of a "weird seizure," like those to which the young prince in Tennyson was unfortunately subject, or those which befall the

sensitive reader of Calderon's "Life is a Dream." It is pretty certain that in stating the case for scepticism Pater has bent the stick, in his efforts to straighten it, too much the other way. But at any rate it was by such considerations as these that he came to distrust all dogmatisms. The choice of a philosophy, he says, is a matter of temperament, and the service of it, he adds, quoting Novalis, is simply to vivify and dephlegmatise our stolid and self-satisfied minds. As he said:

"Philosophy serves culture not by the fancied gift of absolute or transcendental knowledge, but by suggesting questions which help one to detect the passion and strangeness and dramatic contrasts of life." So he fell into a liking for all phil-

osophies, in so far as they were poetic or suggestive. Idealism, materialism, stoicism, epicureanism, all, somewhere, received luminous exposition at his hands. But upon none of them could he heartily bestow his allegiance. His own sympathy lay with the reserved judgment of Socrates and Montaigne.

Most moralising sceptics in philosophy have made the end of their scepticism the attainment of "ataraxia," or a genial, untroubled equanimity. This was not the end which Pater proposed to himself. Neither was he, even in his younger days, precisely of the Cyrenaic school of such men as Pepys and Beckford and Temple, who, esteeming human life as but a "froward child," would soothe and

cozen it with toys and pretty games until it fall asleep. Neither was he of those who sport considerably with Amaryllis in the shade, and still less, even in his "warm blood and canicular days," was he of those who follow in the train of Laïs. This was "the lower Cyrenaicism" perennial in all ages; his should be higher. If for him the eye must be the determining influence in life, he must strive to be of the number of those "made perfect by the love of visible beauty."

This, however, was the result of a slowly ripening growth. If we compare the doctrines of the "Renaissance" with those of "Marius" we shall discover a significant evolution. In the earlier volume, where he is concerned with the pomp and

glory of the Italian Renaissance, its devotion to sensuous beauty and poetic passions, his position is nearer to what men have understood by Hedonism. The supreme question of life, he thinks then, is, "How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?" "To burn always," he says, "with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy is success in life. . . . While all melts beneath our feet we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or the

work of the artist's hand, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the brilliancy of their gifts, some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening."

It will be seen that the ideal life shadowed forth in such sentences could never be the life of the jaded, Sybaritic person or of the vague-eyed æsthete, sometimes thought to belong to the school of Pater. It is, rather, the peculiar ideal of the ardent yet fastidious young man whose receptive powers have ripened early; such a young man, for example, as Goethe was upon a time, or Browning. But, as actually in the case of Goethe, so theoretically

in the case of Pater, all this was liable to serious objection on the ground of its tendency. There was small place in this ethical scheme for any restraining or inhibitive force; and, on the other hand, provided the person were listless in mind or morbid in body, it contained but scant incentive to any high, self-forgetful endeavour.*

* He is a graceless biographer who quotes from parodies upon the work of his author, but perhaps a sentence from Mr. Mallock's mockery may help to distinguish more clearly the misconception which Pater suffered in the thoughts of many—a misconception not unallied to a real weakness in his teaching: "The end of life," says Mr. Rose, in a voice like a lonely flute, "is the consciousness of exquisite living —in the making our own each highest thrill of joy that the moment offers us—be it some touch of colour on the sea or on the mountains, the early dew in the crimson shadows of a rose, or the shining of a woman's limbs in clear water—" He is interrupted by some confusion among the ladies.

This Pater seems to have felt and set himself to correct. Normally, of course, we have no right to confuse the sentiments of the creative artist with those which he puts into the mouth of his creature; but with Pater and Marius the case is somewhat exceptional. In the whole manner and method of its composition "Marius" is an exposition and defence of a mode of life which not only stirred the author's deepest interest and sympathy, but, as we know from the circumstances of his own career, was an actual and effective ideal to him. By the time Pater set himself to the writing of "Marius" the natural ripening of his mind had so widened the theory that it bears a very different face. He has begun to care a little less for the

splendours of the Renaissance, and more for his first love, the chaster beauties of Hellenic life and art. In the "Renaissance" he might have seemed almost the orator of luxurious wealth; a strange apostasy for one who set out as a disciple of Ruskin! But now all this is changed, subdued, refined. The Greek spirit, with its engaging naturalness, simple and debonair, is now more clearly for him "the Sangrael of an endless pilgrimage."

If the æsthetic morality of the "Renaissance" might almost have found its arch-saint in such a person as Benvenuto Cellini of pious memory, we see in "Marius" how all systems of morality, in the practice of their wisest exponents, come together toward one ideal of the perfect

life. Marius, it is explicitly stated, makes not pleasure, but fulness of life his aim and end. Furthermore, the emphasis here is shifted to rest upon austerer and more elevated things. The chief pursuit of Marius is "the art of so relieving the ideal or poetic traits, the elements of distinction in our daily life—of so exclusively living with them—that the unadorned remainder of it, the drift or débris of our day, comes to be as though it were not." He cares most now for the poetic beauty of clear thought, "the actually æsthetic charm of a cold austerity of mind." He sees that this manner of life might come to be in itself a kind of mystic piety, or religion, that it would demand "energy, variety, and choice of experience, includ-

ing noble pain and sorrow even, loves such as those in the exquisite old story of Apuleius, sincere and strenuous forms of the moral life such as Seneca and Epictetus—whatever form of human life, in short, might be heroic, impassioned, ideal." Finally, he felt that this mode of life would exclude much dalliance with the lighter joys of "settled, sweet epicurean life," for it would mean such a life as that which we have seen Pater living in his Oxford chambers, "a life of sober industry, of industrious study, only possible through healthy rule keeping clear the eye alike of body and soul."

With such an ideal actually and dynamically present in his mind, Marius speedily arrived at the idea of responsi-

bility. His mode of life was enjoined upon him by a sense of duty, by a "categorical imperative" almost, "to offend against which brought with it a strange feeling of disloyalty as to a person." With this sense of obligation firm within him, pagan Marius came to the last stage in the philosophic pilgrimage. His deep and sombre meditation upon the variety of the world, the inwardness and grief of life, finally conducted him, by the beaten path of experience, to a kind of human idealism, with its roots struck deep into the general heart of the race. Like that other sceptic Hume, Marius—and Pater with him—came to find the essence and reality of life in sympathy. Only with Pater this mood attained a kind of tran-

scendental elevation and import. In the chapter upon "The Will as Vision" he subscribes to the old belief of the mystics, now upheld by many thinkers of diverse sorts, Kantian philosophers, orthodox religionists, experimental psychologists, that after all *the will to believe* is the whole matter.

This is the sum of Pater's Cyrenaic philosophy of life. Its plea was for a system of morals as living and flexible as life itself, and for a recognition of the importance of "being" as well as "doing." Such considerations have perennial value, but especial significance in an age like ours when it is so fatally easy to glorify over much great aggregations of horse-power, men of high voltage, and the

efficient life. But here again one must guard against extremes. Cyrenaicism, in turn, needs the correction of the Gospel of Work which Carlyle preached so tonically. *Tristem neminem fecit* may indeed be said at the last of each modern Marius, but can one always add, "He was a labourer worthy of his hire"?

If we shift our point of view a little, and, instead of contemplating the new Cyrenaicism in its philosophic and ethical aspects, consider its religious implications, we shall discover some significant facts.

As, in philosophy, Pater progressed from scepticism to an idealism rooted in experience, so in religion he moved from virtual paganism toward practical Chris-

tianity. In the "Renaissance" he values all religions, Paganism, Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, as he values all philosophies, chiefly for the romantic elements of strangeness, beauty, or passion in them. Like that earlier Cyrenaic Euhemerus, he has his own philosophy of religion. He has tarried with German rationalists and French biographers of Jesus. He considers all religions as stages in the inexhaustible activity and creativeness of the human mind, "in which all religions alike have their root and in which all are reconciled, just as the fancies of childhood and the thoughts of old age meet and are laid at rest in the personality of the individual." And through them all, as Pater sees it, runs the warp of

Paganism. In the essay on Winckelmann he writes:

"Still, the broad foundation in mere human nature of all religions as they exist for the greatest number is a universal pagan sentiment, a paganism which existed before the Greek religion, and has lingered far onward into the Christian world, ineradicable, like some persistent vegetable growth, because its seed is an element of the very soil out of which it springs. This pagan sentiment measures the sadness with which the human mind is filled, whenever its thoughts wander far from what is here and now. It is beset by notions of irresistible natural powers, for the most part ranged against man, but the secret also of his fortune, making the

earth golden and the grape fiery for him. He makes gods in his own image, gods smiling and flower-crowned or bleeding by some sad fatality, to console him by their wounds, never closed from generation to generation. It is with a rush of home-sickness that the thought of death presents itself. He would remain at home forever on the earth if he could; as it loses its colour and the senses fail, he clings ever closer to it; but since the mouldering of bones and flesh must go on to the end, he is careful for charms and talismans, that may chance to have some friendly power in them, when the inevitable shipwreck comes. Such sentiment is a part of the eternal basis of all religions, modified, indeed, by changes of time and

place, but indestructible, because its root is so deep in the earth of man's nature. . . . This pagan worship, in spite of local variations, essentially one, is an element in all religions. It is the anodyne which the religious principle, like one administering opiates to the incurable, has added to the law which makes life sombre for the vast majority of mankind."

But notwithstanding this very modern comprehensiveness, Pater always possessed a lively sympathy with ecclesiastical tradition, and he felt especially "the soothing influence which the Roman Church has often exerted over spirits too independent to be its subjects." We have seen how early he developed a love for its ritualistic observances; and in his last

essay—on Pascal, a significant theme—he recurs to the well-worn path again. "Multitudes," he says, "in every generation have felt at least the æsthetic charm of the rites of the Catholic Church. For Pascal, on the other hand, a certain puerility, a certain unprofitableness in them is but an extra trial of faith."

In spite of his rationalising tendency, in spite of his profuse sympathies, Pater, like almost all English men of letters who have not died young, tended as he grew older toward conservatism and a trust in the Establishment. Many of his friends, indeed, think that had he lived but a little longer he would have taken orders, sought some quiet country living, and so spent the remnant of his days in the odour of

traditional piety. However that may be, it is certain that in all his work after "Marius" there is a strain of feeling quite other than the fluid religious scepticism of his youth. He still believes in the usefulness of a frequent purgation of narrow religious sentiment to promote "a kind of cheerful daylight in men's tempers"; but his recognition of the profound mystery of personality eternally underlying those draughts of intellectual day gives all his later thought a certain mystical and religious colouring.

But, more than that, his thought is now distinctively Christian, though his specific position is still obviously latitudinarian. It is not unlike that of such men as Martineau, but with a slightly greater sympa-

thy for all that is meant by the historic development of the Church. It is not unlike the attitude of Tennyson—of the *anima naturaliter Christiana* everywhere—stretching lame hands of faith and faintly trusting the larger hope. Here again we may let him speak for himself. In the review of "Robert Elsmere" he writes of certain theological problems with unusual candour and simplicity. In a passage which, in view of all the facts, has a clear autobiographic ring, he says:

"Robert Elsmere was a type of a large class of minds who cannot be sure that the sacred story is true. It is philosophical, doubtless, and a duty to the intellect to recognise our doubts, to locate them, perhaps to give them practical effect. It

may be also a moral duty to do this. But then there is also a large class of minds which cannot be sure it is false—minds of very various degrees of conscientiousness and intellectual power, up to the highest. They will think those who are quite sure it is false unphilosophical through lack of doubt. For their part they make allowance in their scheme of life for a great possibility, and with some of them that bare concession of possibility (the subject of it being what it is) becomes the most important fact in the world. The recognition of it straightway opens wide the door to hope and love; and such persons are, as we fancy they always will be, the nucleus of a church. Their particular phase of doubt, of philosophic uncertain-

ty, has been the secret of millions of good Christians, multitudes of worthy priests."

In such passages as this we see the perennial justification of that Cyrenaicism so dear to the genial heart of youth; we see that the devoted and whole-hearted quest of beauty, provided it be truly devoted and whole-hearted, may not lead one far astray from the good; and, finally, we see that often nowadays, as in the old transitional times, "the true preparation for the gospel is in the lives of such as Marius." Had "Gaston de Latour" been completed we should have had a confession of faith even more impressive and convincing. That stately fragment would have shown how at the end Christianity may prevail not only over such a pagan-

ism as Marius was bred in, but even over a scepticism so stubborn and elusive as Montaigne's. Quite in accord with all this is the testimony of the friend who preached the memorial sermon from which I have already quoted:

"His whole life seemed to me to be the gradual consecration of an exquisite sense of beauty to the highest ends; an almost literally exact advance through the stages of admiration in the *Symposium,* till at last he reached the sure haven, the One Source of all that is fair and good." All of which is bound together into the unity of imaginative insight in the ultimate poem of unhappy Lionel Johnson, one of the truest of Pater's student friends:

WALTER PATER

Gracious God rest him, he who toiled so well
Secrets of grace to tell
Graciously; as the awed rejoicing priest
Officiates at the feast,
Knowing, how deep within the liturgies
Lie hid the mysteries.
Half of a passionately pensive soul
He showed us, not the whole;
Who loved him best, they best, they only, knew
The deeps, they might not view;
That, which was private between God and him;
To others, justly dim.
Calm Oxford autumns and preluding springs!
To me your memory brings
Delight upon delight, but chiefest one;
The thought of Oxford's son,
Who gave me of his welcome and his praise,
When white were still my days;

Ere death had left life darkling, nor had sent
Lament upon lament:
Ere sorrow told me, how I loved my lost,
And bade me base love's cost.
Scholarship's constant saint, he kept her light
In him divinely white;
With cloistral jealousness of ardour strove
To guard her sacred grove,
Inviolate by unworldly feet, nor paced
In desecrating haste.
Oh, sweet grove smiling of that wisdom, brought
From arduous ways of thought;
Oh, golden patience of that travailing soul,
So hungered for the goal,
And vowed to keep, through subtly vigilant pain,
From pastime on the plain;
Enamoured of the difficult mountain air
Up beauty's Hill of Prayer!

Stern is the faith of art, right stern, and he
Loved her severity.
Momentous things he prized, gradual and fair,
Births of passionate air:
Some austere setting of an ancient sun,
Its midday glories done,
Over a silent melancholy sea
In sad serenity:
Some delicate dawning of a new desire,
Distilling fragrant fire
On hearts of men prophetically fain
To feel earth young again:
Some strange rich passage of the dreaming earth,
Fulfilled with warmth and worth.
Ended, his services: yet, albeit, farewell
Tolls the faint vesper bell,
Patient beneath his Oxford trees and towers
He still is gently ours:

Hierarch of the spirit, pure and strong,
Worthy Uranian song.
Gracious God keep him: and God grant to me
By miracle to see
That unforgettably most gracious friend,
In the never-ending end.

VI

LAST YEARS

In 1891 and 1892 Pater delivered at Oxford, to young students of philosophy there, a course of lectures upon the Academic philosophy. The following year these were printed in a single volume ununder the title "Plato and Platonism." More than any other of his books this exhibits the excellence of his scholarship, and the rich strength of his intellectual powers, at their ripest period, employed in the scholarly vitalisation of a difficult theme. The Platonic philosophy, conceived not as a system, but as a group of tendencies, is outlined against a background of Greek life, realised in all historic and humane aspects and poetic

phases. The genesis of these tendencies out of the earlier systems of Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and the Eleatics is traced with remarkable insight, yet with equally remarkable sanity and moderation. Plato's own temperament, the furnishing of his mind, his intricate relation to Socrates, are all portrayed with that singularly intimate interpretative power which we have seen as the chief trait of Pater's prose. In form, in the carefully considered unity in variety of its structure, in the unusually self-denying yet exquisitely wrought style, it is perhaps the most thoroughly satisfactory of all his works. Jowett himself was among the first to express to Pater his profound admiration for the learning and insight displayed in

the book, and to tender his congratulations upon its publication.

In 1893 Pater gave up the house at Kensington and took his household goods and gods back to Oxford. He has often been described as he appeared at this time. He is pictured as "a man of medium height, rather heavily built, with a peculiar though slight stoop. His face was pale, and perhaps a dark and very thick moustache made it seem even more so." His expression is said to have had in repose a singular impassiveness, like that of "a Bismarck turned dreamer." But in spite of this impassiveness he was a wonderfully winsome companion to his friends. As is the wont of the Dutch countenance, his face never lost a certain

pleasing youthfulness. His manners, though reserved, were simple and kindly, and often playful. He intensely disliked all noise and extravagance; and his own voice, as all who knew him agree, was low and musical. He was a serene companion, and people liked to be with him. Yet he never married. One wonders a little, as he wondered at Pascal's single state, "Was it mere oddity of genius? Or was it the last fine, dainty touch of difference from ordinary people and their motives?"

But it was not for him to enjoy much longer the academic life that he loved, or to taste deeper of the joy of his growing fame and influence. In July, 1894, he fell sick of a rheumatic fever. It was not thought to be serious; ere long he be-

came convalescent and was permitted to sit up and look out upon the world of his delight. Then, suddenly, came a quick relapse, and he died on July 30, 1894. He was in the fifty-fifth year of his life, yet it seemed like the death of a young man.

It is evident that the life we have passed in review was like that of Gray, intrinsically an academic product. But, more than Gray, Pater "spoke out." Like the earlier scholar he was a little indolent, and, perhaps, rather too much disposed to care for the suavities of life; but his humanism meant too much to him, his sense of the burden of a message was too keen to let him be content with a meagre

product. There was a fine health and sanity in his life, yet he was much of the dreamer withal; he had something of the "inward tacitness of mind" of the born mystic, united to a wistful and humorsome eagerness to know and experience everything. Hence, while his bodily self remained for the most part, like Montaigne's, with seeming indolence at home, his mind was bent toward a continual observation of new and unknown things,

Come gente che pensa suo cammino,
Che va col core, è col corpo dimora:

Like Virgil and like Kant, he is one of the striking examples of the power of the mind to transcend space and time and

make a home-staying man a citizen of the world. As Kant at Königsberg wrote his marvellously exact accounts of the South Sea Islanders, so Pater at Oxford revisited the Lacedæmonian state.

Now to a man of this sensitive and receptive humour, his cloistered life, relieved by social amenities, but not broken by affairs, had manifest advantages. It afforded opportunity for the clarification and generalisation of his intimations of humanity; it reinforced them and gave them precision and breadth by carefully cultivated scholarship. He cared, too, for other things beside reading and study. We must not forget that "lust of the eye" in him, so desirous of beauty. He cared, perhaps not always wisely, for all strong

impressions from art and nature, for all that is beautiful, or strange, or vivid—for pretty coins, for tales of adventure and hair-breadth escape—and for the sudden intimacies of friendship. But this absorbing power of the true humanistic temperament made him the heir of the sorrow of the world as well as of its beauty and joy. "Variety of affection in a household in which many relations had lived together had brought variety of sorrow." So, in his work, by a kind of pervading insinuation, he makes one taste the springs of tears in the very nature of things.

But why strive to refine our impression?

Ter frustra comprensa manus effugit imago.

His personality was of the sort that is

best felt in the style of his work, better portrayed by analogy and distinction than by definition. He was an idealist, yet not of the spiritual family of Sidney and Shelley; he lacked their youthful enthusiasm and exuberance; and he was far too sophisticate to embrace with passion the first fair Vision of Truth that crossed his path. He was never, like them, doctrinaire. He was, also, too full a man to fall into the rough and ready generalising which is the most frequent cause of popularity, as it is of cock-sureness and energy in style. Nor was he, precisely, of the school of Coleridge. He held, rather oddly, that Coleridge took himself and the world quite too seriously, and would have been benefited by a touch of gently

humourous unconcern. In spite of his sense of duty, his friendships, his pity, his ardent humanism, one always feels underlying Pater's work, as it underlies Da Vinci's secular masterpiece, something of this gently humourous unconcern. He saw the burden of the mystery with a sad lucidity of view. Instead of being passionately disturbed by it, he was pleasantly interested as he sat at ease in his ivory tower. He possessed a large portion of that modernity which finds its highest cause for rejoicing in that "the world is so full of a number of things," and he shared in the subtilely optimistic view of evil, that properly to understand all is to forgive all—*tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*. So he came, one

thinks, like the object of one of his own characterisations, to "a kind of moral sexlessness, a kind of impotence, an ineffectual wholeness of nature, yet with a true beauty and significance of its own."

He has never been in any sense a popular writer. That numerous monstrosity, the novel-reading public, has never discovered him. The well-meaning persons who, like the gay boy in Stevenson, find in the *Athenæum* only "the most awful swipes about poetry and the use of globes," if they attempt Pater at all, find him uncongenial and difficult to understand. In a sense he is a writer's writer, still there are some even among the elect of letters who have a distaste for what they term his "pulpy" periods, "his lack

of virility and paucity of ideas." "More matter and less art!" has been the critics' cry. Yet if this essay has been in any degree successful in apprehending the peculiar individuality of his work it should be clear that such objections are beside the mark. Precisely such writing as his, so exquisitely modulated, so infinitely expressive, has I know not what cloistral value in this insistent worldly present. It is this in him which has won him his potent influence over the minds of young persons of a certain type. There are critics who have sometimes seen in him the inspiration of a school of sentimentalists and stylists now much with us. This is a perverse judgment, for the most typical men of this set have much more

in common with De Quincey's tradition in prose than they have with Pater's, while many of them prefer a stiff, meretricious brocade to the softer colour and sinuous folds of our author's garment of style. It is indeed true that many young writers who aspire to write scholarly, expressive English, are diligently studying Pater, just as they study Stevenson and Newman and Addison and the earlier and more robust masters; and in a Taylorian lecture at Oxford the French stylist Bourget gave eloquent expression to the obligation of French writers to the "*parfait prosateur*." But his real school, if he has such a thing, is to be found among those who have read him not as a stylist, but as a scholar and humanist, who

have responded to his interest in some field of their own labour or delight. And among these there is small trace of the effeminacy, uneasy self-consciousness, and weariness of life which are the marks of those pseudo-Paterians whom some have thought to be his true followers.

The final merit of Pater's work is its admirable educative and refining tendency. While one may fail to agree with this or that opinion, or may tire of the subtile, intensive style, he who will approach him sympathetically may sweeten the day by the reading, and be sure of taking from his pages a lively sense of the fulness and colour of the world, and a fresh impulse to a gracefully ordered, thoughtful life.

CHRONOLOGY

1839

Walter Pater is born.

1853

Goes to King's School in Canterbury.

1858

Matriculates at Queen's College, Oxford.

1862

Graduates B. A. and becomes a private tutor.

1864

Proceeds M. A. and is elected Fellow of Brasenose College.

1865

Visits Italy for the first time.

1866

"Coleridge," appeared in the *Westminster Review,* January; reprinted in "Appreciations," 1889.

1867

"Winckelmann," appeared in the *Westminster Review,* January; reprinted in "Studies in the Renaissance," 1873.

1868

"Æsthetic Poetry," written, first published in "Appreciations," 1889.

1869

"Notes on Leonardo da Vinci," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* November; reprinted in "Studies in the Renaissance," 1873.

1870

"Sandro Botticelli," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* October; reprinted in "Studies in the Renaissance," 1873.

1871

"Pico della Mirandola," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* October; reprinted in "Studies in the Renaissance," 1873.

"Poetry of Michelangelo," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* November; reprinted in "Studies in the Renaissance," 1873.

1873

"Studies in the History of the Renaissance," published by Messrs. Macmillan, contained in addition to the essays already mentioned, studies of "Aucassin and Nicolette" (in later editions entitled "Two Early French Stories"), "Luca della Robbia," "Joachim du Bellay," and a "Conclusion."

1874

"Wordsworth," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* April; "Measure for Measure," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* November; both reprinted in "Appreciations," 1889.

1875

Review of "Symonds' Renaissance in Italy, the Age of the Despots," *Academy,* July 31.

"Demeter and Persephone," delivered as lectures at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, appeared in the *Fortnightly Review,* January and February, 1876; reprinted in "Greek Studies," 1895.

1876

"Romanticism," appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* November; reprinted as "Postscript" in "Appreciations," 1889.

"A Study of Dionysus," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* December; reprinted in "Greek Studies," 1895.

1877

"The School of Giorgione," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* October; reprinted in third edition of "The Renaissance," 1888.

"The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry," second edition. "Conclusion" omitted.

1878

"The Child in the House," appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* August; reprinted, privately, by Mr. H. Daniel, 1894, and in "Miscellaneous Studies," 1895.

"Charles Lamb," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* October; reprinted in "Appreciations," 1889.

"Love's Labour's Lost," written; appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* December, 1885; reprinted in "Appreciations," 1889.

"The Bacchanals of Euripides," written; appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* May, 1889; reprinted in Tyrrell's edition of the "Bacchae," 1892; reprinted in "Greek Studies," 1895.

1880

"The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* February and March; reprinted in "Greek Studies," 1895.

"The Marbles of Ægina," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* April; reprinted in "Greek Studies," 1895.

1881

Pater begins the composition of "Marius."

1882

He spends the winter in Rome.

1883

"Dante Gabriel Rossetti," written; appeared in "Appreciations," 1889.

1885

"Marius the Epicurean," published by Messrs. Macmillan.

"A Prince of Court Painters," appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* October; reprinted in "Imaginary Portraits," 1887.

1886

Pater removes his household to Kensington.

Reviews "Four Books for Students of English Literature," *Guardian,* February 17; reprinted in "Essays from the Guardian," 1896.

Reviews "Amiel's Journal Intime," *Guardian,* March 17; reprinted in "Essays from the Guardian," 1896.

"Feuillet's 'La Morte,'" written; published in second edition of "Appreciations," 1890.

"Sir Thomas Browne," written; published in "Appreciations," 1889.

"Sebastian Van Storck," appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* March; reprinted in "Imaginary Portraits," 1887.

"Denys L'Auxerrois," appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* October; reprinted in "Imaginary Portraits," 1887.

1887

Reviews "Symons' An Introduction to the Study of Browning," *Guardian,* November 9; reprinted in "Essays from the Guardian," 1896.

Reviews "Lemaître's Serenus and other Tales," in *Macmillan's Magazine,* November.

"Duke Carl of Rosenmold," appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* May; reprinted in "Imaginary Portraits," published by Messrs. Macmillan.

1888

Reviews "Robert Elsmere," *Guardian,* March 28.

Reviews "Doran's Annals of the English Stage," *Guardian,* June 27; both reprinted in "Essays from the Guardian," 1896.

Reviews "Life and Letters of Flaubert," *Pall Mall Gazette,* August 25.

"Gaston de Latour," first five chapters appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* from June to October; reprinted in 1896.

"Style," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* December; reprinted in "Appreciations," 1889.

"The Renaissance," third edition, published by Messrs. Macmillan, with the "Conclusion" revised and reinstated.

1889

Reviews "The Complete Poetical Works of Wordsworth," ed. J. Morley, *Athenæum,* January 26.

Reviews three editions of "Wordsworth," *Guardian,* February 27.

Reviews "Fabre's Norine," *Guardian,* June 12; both reprinted in "Essays from the Guardian," 1896.

Reviews "Correspondence de Gustave Flaubert," *Athenæum,* August 3.

Reviews "Fabre's Toussaint Galabru," *Nineteenth Century,* April.

Reviews "Symons' Days and Nights," *Pall Mall Gazette,* March 23.

Reviews "It Is Thyself," *Pall Mall Gazette,* April 15.

"Hippolytus Veiled," appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* August; reprinted in "Greek Studies," 1895.

"Giordano Bruno," appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* August; revised and reprinted as Chapter VII. of "Gaston de Latour," 1896.

Reviews "Lilly's A Century of Revolution," *Nineteenth Century,* December.

"Appreciations," with an "Essay on Style," published by Messrs. Macmillan, containing the essays mentioned above with the addition of "Shakespeare's English Kings."

1890

Reviews "The Contes of M. Augustin Filon," *Guardian,* July 16, and "Mr. Gosse's Poems," *Guardian,* October 29; both reprinted in "Essays from the Guardian," 1896.

"Art Notes in North Italy," appeared in *New Review,* November; reprinted in "Miscellaneous Studies," 1895.

"Prosper Mérimée," delivered as lecture at Oxford in November, appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* December; reprinted in "Miscellaneous Studies," 1895.

"Appreciations," second edition, omitting "Æsthetic Poetry," and including "Feuillet's La Morte," published by Messrs. Macmillan.

1891

Reviews "Dorian Gray," *Bookman,* November.

Begins his course of lectures on "Plato and Platonism."

1892

Contributes the "Introduction to the Purgatory of Dante Alighieri," by C. L. Shadwell.

"The Genius of Plato," appeared in *Contemporary Review,* February; reprinted as Chapter VI. of "Plato and Platonism," 1893.

"A Chapter on Plato," appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine,* May; reprinted as Chapter I. of "Plato and Platonism," 1893.

"Lacedaemon," appeared in *Contemporary Review,* June; reprinted as Chapter VIII. of "Plato and Platonism," 1893.

"Emerald Uthwart," appeared in *New Review,* June and July; reprinted in "Miscellaneous Studies," 1895.

"Raphael," delivered as a lecture at Oxford, August; appeared in *Fortnightly Review,* October; reprinted in "Miscellaneous Studies," 1895.

1893

Pater removes his household to Oxford.

Contributes "Mr. George Moore as an Art Critic" to *Daily Chronicle,* June 10.

"Apollo in Picardy," appeared in *Harper's Magazine,* November; reprinted in "Miscellaneous Studies," 1895.

"Plato and Platonism," published by Messrs. Macmillan.

1894

"The Age of Athletic Prizemen," appeared in *Contemporary Review,* February; reprinted in "Greek Studies," 1895.

"Some Great Churches in France, (1) Notre Dame d'Amiens, (2) Vezelay," appeared in *Nineteenth Century,* March and June; reprinted in "Miscellaneous Studies," 1895.

"Pascal," written for delivery as a lecture at Oxford in July, appeared in the *Contemporary Review,* December; reprinted in "Miscellaneous Studies," 1895.

Walter Pater died, July 30.

1895

"Miscellaneous Studies" and "Greek Studies," containing the essays mentioned above, are pre-

pared for the press by Mr. C. L. Shadwell, and published by Messrs. Macmillan.

1896

"Essays from the Guardian," published privately at the Chiswick Press. "Gaston de Latour, an Unfinished Romance," with contents as above, slightly augmented from manuscript, prepared for the press by Mr. C. L. Shadwell, and published by Messrs. Macmillan

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